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THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP

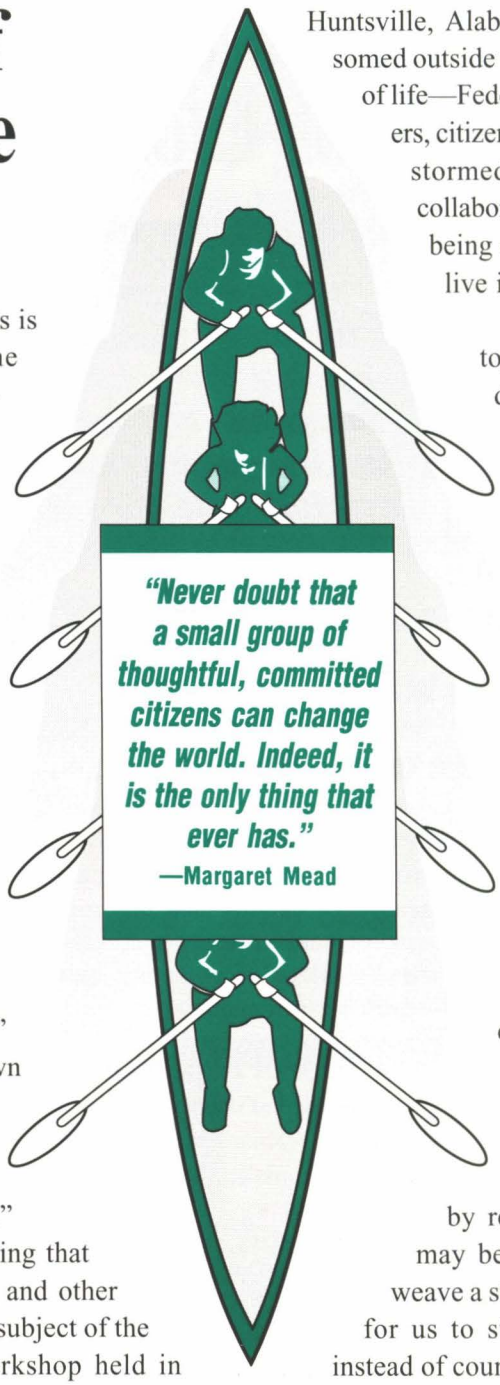
United States Department of Agriculture ■ Forest Service ■ FS-553 September 1993

The Power of Collaborative Planning

The ancient Chinese word for crisis is composed of two charcters, one meaning danger, the other opportunity. These days, it seems that rural communities, especially those with natural resource-based economies, contend with plenty of both. Danger comes when shifting economic currents threaten to strand rural communities. Opportunity arises when citizens grab the oars and row together toward a sustainable future.

"The people of Kremmeling, Colorado, woke up one morning to a harsh reality. The Louisiana-Pacific (L-P) wafer-board plant, where one-fifth of our residents worked, was shut down for good." says Bill Koelm, Kremmeling Town Manager. "When the shock wore off, we sat down as a community and started building a new identity—a new future—for ourselves."

The community-based planning that averted a tailspin in Kremmeling and other towns around the country was the subject of the "Seeking Common Ground" workshop held in Huntsville, Alabama, April 26–28. As spring blossomed outside the windows, a group from all walks of life—Federal land managers, community leaders, citizens—put our heads together and brainstormed. We asked ourselves: How can collaborative planning contribute to the well-being and survival of the communities we live in and care about?



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
—Margaret Mead

Most of us were accustomed to top-down planning, in which the few decide for the many, and change comes from outside. Collaborative planning, we learned, is different. It emerges from the community, honors a full spectrum of values, and assumes that everyone is responsible for the community's success. There's no one leader, and no one is excluded from the table. Collaboration begins with trust building: people educate one another, explore their differences, and discover common ground. Together, they envision a future that's compatible with their values and create an action plan to help get there. The whole community, in essence, signs up for change.

Collaborative planning can tap an enormous reservoir of collective energy, talent, and inspiration. For public land communities paralyzed by resource-use conflicts, collaboration may be a way to defuse polarization and weave a stronger fabric for the future. It's time for us to start meeting in conference rooms instead of courtrooms.

The leader's role is not as problem-solver but as catalyst, mobilizing others to solve problems. Leadership, then, must emerge from the communities of interest — communities that discover ways of working effectively with each other.

**(William Shands,
Pinchot Institute for Conservation)**

Helping Ourselves to the Future— Changing Scenarios Close To Home

Many public land communities are struggling with high unemployment and an uncertain future. They are at a crossroads, having lost or are about to lose the mill, mine, or other industry that employed many in their community. Other towns see the storm front heading their way, and for the first time in a long time, they're packing town meeting halls and making plans for the next generation. As various speakers at our workshop pointed out, the winds of change are freshening, not just here in rural America, but throughout the world. Here's a sampling of the trends we talked about.

"Community Consciousness" and "Sense of Place" Are Emerging.

Small towns know they have to take back their destinies. Often the transformation comes when they are told that a major employer in their town is cutting back jobs or moving away. The people left behind are turning to one another and resurrecting the sense of community and resourcefulness that made them strong.

A renewed "sense of place" is emerging in America as more and more people look for roots and identity in the places they live. Many are moving to small towns to search for values and lifestyles not often found in larger cities. For newcomers and long-time residents alike, the prospect of enhancing the community they love instills an even greater resolve to control their destinies. This resolve, said workshop members, is the firmest piece of common ground on which we can stand.

"It is a basic tenet of a democratic system that individual citizens, acting through their communities, have both the right, and the responsibility, to define their own visions for the future."

From the President's Council on Rural America's Report, Revitalizing Rural America Through Collaboration

The "Ego of Expertise" Is Losing Ground.

People are realizing that they don't need "experts" to make all their decisions. If communities are to do the work and make the sacrifices needed to achieve their dream, it must be their dream. As Mayor Katz of Portland, OR, told the members of the Forest Conference, "People need the chance to prove they have the wisdom, imagination, and courage to find solutions." Michael Kinsley urged the Huntsville group to take that chance: "Collaborative planning is not a science," he said. "It's an art. Don't wait for an expert to come to town; just jump in."

Resource Use on National Forests Is Changing.

The Forest Service is charged with "serving people and caring for the land." When it comes to deciding how much timber harvesting, mining, grazing, or other commodity use both the land and society will support, it can be quite a balancing act. In every decision, Federal laws require land managers to take into account public comments, the latest scientific knowledge, and what is happening in the lands surrounding the forest. Over time, societal values change, what we know about ecosystems changes, and impacts accumulate. As a result, some forests are not able to offer historical levels and mixes of outputs. For some communities, this means finding alternate sources for economic survival and long-term economic health.

Towns once defining themselves as timber or mining centers are realizing that they can diversify. In their emerging visions, natural resources are still a part of the picture, but the perception

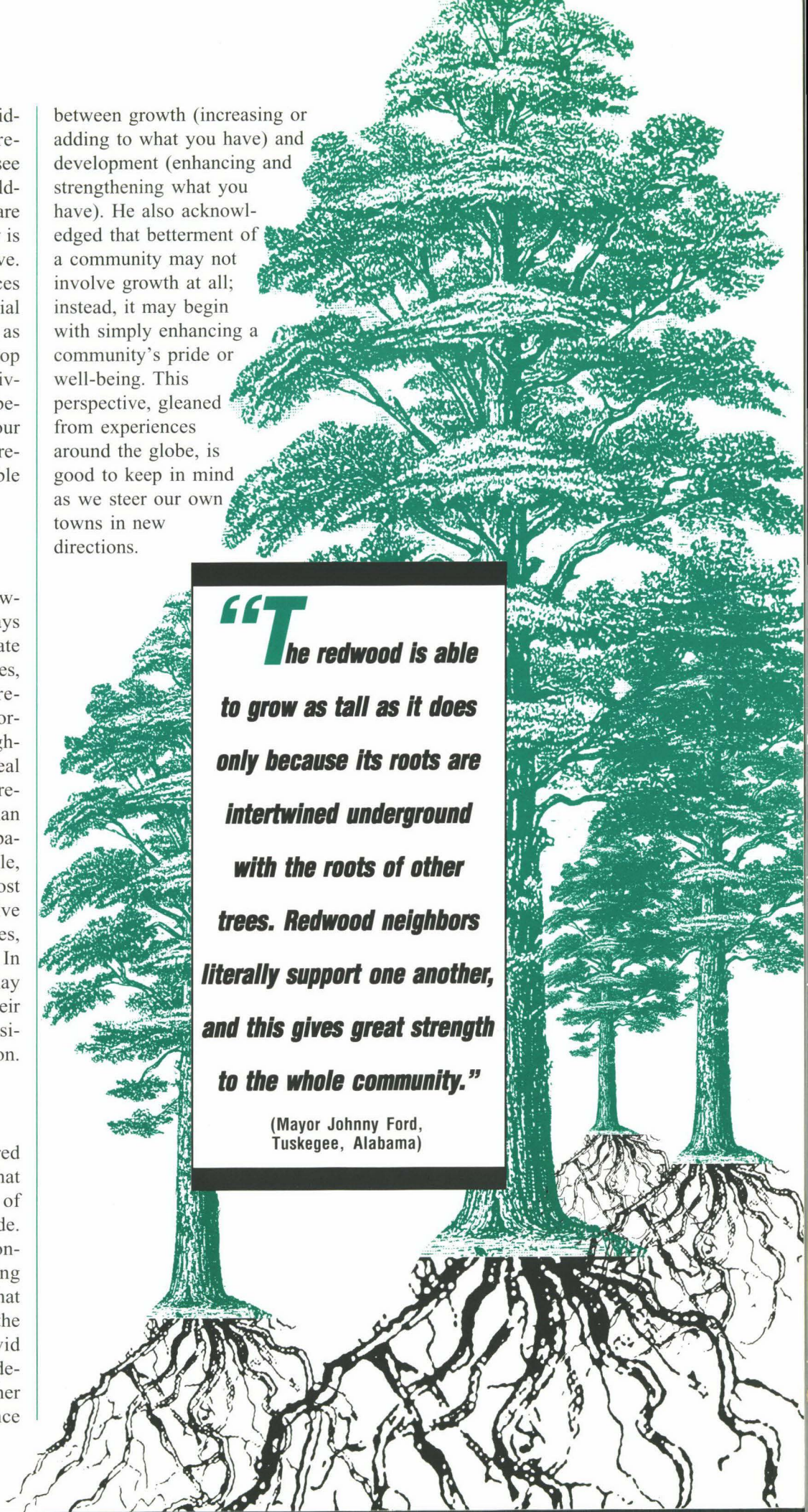
of what is economically valuable is widening to include noncommodity resources. Communities are starting to see that amenity resources — scenery, wildlife, clean water, cultural artifacts — are a major reason why their community is a desirable place to visit and to live. Towns are realizing that the resources at hand — whether they be commercial timber, special forest products, such as mushrooms and pine straw, a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, or unfettered rivers for rafting and flyfishing — are becoming increasingly important in our urbanized world. Valuing all these resources is the first step to a sustainable economy.

Tomorrow's Industries Are Innovation-Dependent.

"Yesterday's industries involved growing, making, or moving things," says Donovan Rypkema of the Real Estate Trust. To accommodate these industries, towns grew up close to natural resources, defendable terrain, or transportation corridors. Many of today's high-value industries are more apt to deal with ideas and services and are therefore innovation-dependent rather than location-dependent. Since these companies can be small and highly mobile, they can set up shop anywhere. In most cases, they migrate towards progressive communities, where, the thinking goes, innovative people are likely to live. In today's marketplace, communities may find that their very best resource — their prime drawing card for these new businesses — is their creativity and vision.

The Growth Myth is Being Questioned.

David Korten, of the People-Centered Development Forum, reminded us that we are really part of a larger spiral of people pushing for change worldwide. People everywhere are rejecting conventional, top-down decisionmaking and questioning the "growth myth" that has driven development decisions in the past. In an alternative vision, David Korten advocates people-centered development (see chart). Along with other speakers, he emphasized the difference between growth (increasing or adding to what you have) and development (enhancing and strengthening what you have). He also acknowledged that betterment of a community may not involve growth at all; instead, it may begin with simply enhancing a community's pride or well-being. This perspective, gleaned from experiences around the globe, is good to keep in mind as we steer our own towns in new directions.



"The redwood is able to grow as tall as it does only because its roots are intertwined underground with the roots of other trees. Redwood neighbors literally support one another, and this gives great strength to the whole community."

(Mayor Johnny Ford, Tuskegee, Alabama)

Like never before, the Forest Service must renew its commitment to public involvement and actively seek out and incorporate people's views in our decisions about the management of the national forests and grasslands. I envision a new, higher level of dialogue or partnership with the American people.

(Dale Robertson, Chief, Forest Service)

A Community of Heads is Better Than One— The Seeking Common Ground Workshop

What It Was: A workshop exploring collaborative planning: a way to transform individual ideas into a shared community vision that sustains both the economy and the environment. The focus was on communities that currently have a natural-resource-based-economy.

Who Was There: Forest Service employees with responsibility for rural community assistance and planning, together with community leaders, planners, and members of agencies representing rural areas. The cosponsors, along with the USDA Forest Service: National Association of Counties (NACo), National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM), National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), National Association of Regional Councils (NARC), and the National Association of Towns and Townships (NATaT).

We Explored the Power of Collaborative Planning: The meeting was structured to give participants a flavor of collaborative planning and a chance to try it out. It was a combination of mutual education and brainstorming. We explained how planning works in our agencies and towns and then zeroed in on processes we'd like to keep and barriers we'd like to remove. We learned about the various planning models available and the government assistance programs we could plug into. Finally, we dreamed of ways to help communities achieve their visions and then outlined a strategic plan. (See Taking Action After Huntsville, back cover.)

It was heartening to hear how communities had managed to renew their economies without compromising their quality of life.

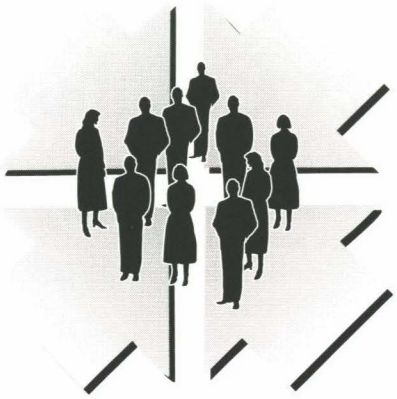
We Were Inspired by People Who Had Succeeded: It was heartening to hear how communities had managed to renew their economies without compromising their quality of life. As part of their visioning process, they identified what made their community unique — the things they didn't want to lose. Much of this had to do with the natural attributes of the land, the rural lifestyle, and the sense of place. Natural resources, such as timber, that once dominated the economic complexion of their area were now a part of a more diverse picture. In some of these towns, government agencies had been a vital force in the transformation, giving us a feel for what type of assistance really works.

We Looked for Ways To Create a More Responsive Government: Using the success stories as models, we looked for ways that all the agencies could work together to provide responsive assistance — both technical and financial — to help towns capture the essence of their dreams and carry them out. We learned that the Forest Service has ample authority and a willingness to help (see How the Forest Service Can Help, page 8). We also learned that we all have strategic planning efforts going on, e.g., forest plans, county land use plans, wild and scenic river plans, etc. The challenge that came from this meeting was to find ways to merge those spheres of planning and, by doing so, to multiply our potential.

We Built Relationships: On an individual level, we did a great job of merging. At breaks, on walks, and over meals, we exchanged "lessons learned" and found ways our communities or agencies could link up. New projects were born, and shelved projects were brought back to life. Some people who hadn't had much contact with the Forest Service or State Rural Development Councils learned of their commitment and vowed to get to know the local people in these agencies. In turn, agency employees got a better fix on how they could really make a difference.

Competing Development Visions

(Prepared by David Korten, The People-Centered Development Forum)



Growth-Centered:	People-Centered:
■ *Material consumption*	■ *Quality of life*
■ *Wants of the monied*	■ *Needs of everyone*
■ *Economic returns to firm/capital*	■ *Economic returns to household/people*
■ *Individual competition*	■ *Community cooperation*
■ *A single borderless & unregulated global market economy favoring:*	■ *Decentralized locally regulated market economies favoring:*
➲ *Production for foreign markets*	➲ *Local production for local markets*
➲ *Transnational ownership*	➲ *Local ownership*
➲ *Local specialization*	➲ *Local diversification*
➲ *International dependence*	➲ *Self-reliance in basic needs*
➲ *Financial & environmental borrowing/debt*	➲ *Financial and environmental conservation/saving*
➲ *Externalized social & environmental costs*	➲ *Internalized social and environmental costs*
➲ *Open competitive access to basic resources*	➲ *Taxed and regulated removal of basic resources*
➲ *Legally protected corporate monopoly control of marketable technology*	➲ *Assured free access to information and beneficial technology*

A town must ask itself what it wants to be. Then it has to come out of the dream and do the hard work needed to achieve the dream.

**(Constance Jordon,
Planning and Urban Studies,
Alabama A&M)**

How Does Collaborative Planning Work?

Collaborative planning is what happens when a group of neighbors get together in the cafe and talk about how to rebuild someone's burnt-down barn. It's when the whole town sits inside the completed structure and talks about how they can keep spirits high and coffers full. It's the "click" we all feel when we truly believe we are solving the world's problems.

Notice that in these scenarios there is no leader per se, no expert telling the group what is best for them. There is a sense of empowerment when various people bring their skills, talent, energy, and ideas to the table. They may not all agree, but they all have a chance to say how they see the world. There are many models of collaborative planning available — approaches that people have test-driven in various communities and then improved over time. These methods offer a step-by-step process for communities to follow together. In some cases, consultants can provide workbooks or send staff members to a town to help people become familiar with the process.

What's great about these models is that they've been tested and tweeked, leaving a streamlined process that encourages people to open up and get personally involved.

Here are three collaborative planning models described at the conference:

1. Search Conferencing

People have been using the search conference method to adapt to change and "grow" their futures since 1959. It's a systematic process whereby stakeholders meet in "social island" conditions for 10 to 20 hours and search for what they really value in their community and how they would like the future to look. Members are carefully selected so the total membership of the group incorporates all the major interests and functions needed for the task. People leave their titles and affiliations at the door, representing only themselves. In search conferencing, everyone is an expert; there are no keynote speakers or leaders, only facilitators who are there to see that the group has the environment it needs to do the hard work.

"The greatest visions are crafted by those who will be living the vision."

**—Louise Liston,
County Commissioner,
Garfield County, Utah**

2. Rocky Mountain Institute's Economic Renewal Program

This Colorado company has developed a community-based, sustainable approach to economic development. Their economic renewal process is a series of town meetings in which the community "mobilizes, envisions its future, conducts a local economic inventory, discovers local economic opportunities, generates prospective economic options, evaluates and selects specific actions or projects, and then develops projects to renew the local economy."

Sharing information through open discussion is the first step in collaborative planning.

(93BW1658-13)

The community strategies that evolve from this process are:

- Sustainable (they don't reduce the ability of future generations to provide for themselves),
- Collaborative (developed by and for the diverse people who live in a community), and
- Value-based (driven by the community's values).

They help renew and revitalize a town by:

1. Keeping dollars in the community (plugging the leaks).
2. Supporting existing businesses.
3. Encouraging new local businesses.
4. Recruiting businesses that are compatible with the community

The institute's orientation session helps prepare the community for the economic renewal process. A community might also opt for a 2-day training seminar that allows participants to use the workbooks, casebooks, and collaborative techniques of economic renewal. Through discussion and practice, participants get a feel for the technique and hear how other communities have successfully strengthened their local economies. Staff members also offer consultation and followup, which may include meeting with key community leaders, facilitating town meetings, or troubleshooting any problems that arise during the process.

3. Communities of Interest and Open Decisionmaking

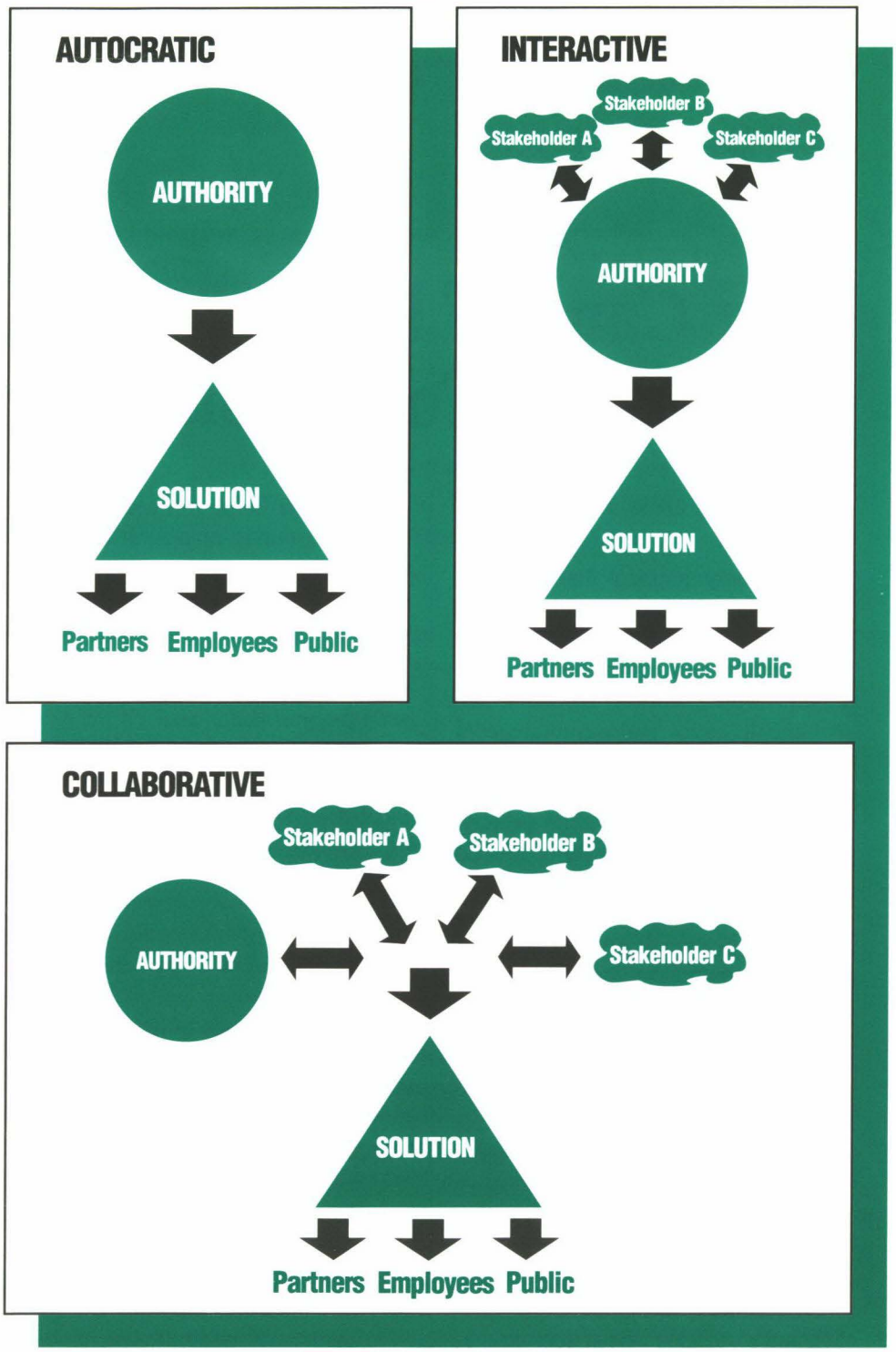
In an effort to involve stakeholders early and solve problems up front, William Shands of the Pinchot Institute for Conservation suggests a non-contentious approach to public involvement. The process is called open decisionmaking and it operates in a working environment called a community of interest. The idea is to promote grass-roots participation by building strong, ongoing relationships among diverse members of the community — anyone who has a stake in the outcome of resource-based decisions. The public official becomes a catalyst rather than a leader, and the responsibility is shared by all members in the community of interest. Instead of pitting groups against each other, the community of interest sets the stage for joint problem-solving and open, transparent decisionmaking.

The new role for the public official is to:

1. Encourage the sharing of information.
2. Encourage a frank exchange of views along all interests.
3. Help identify opportunities for joint problem-solving.
4. Make it clear how a decision was reached.

Forest communities that have tried this process report that they spend more time crafting solutions and less time responding to crises.

Planning Models



There's a tragic overlap of forested areas and persistently high unemployment. In the Forest Service, we're dedicated to making rural economies work for the people.

**(George Leonard,
Associate Chief, Forest Service)**

How Can the Forest Service Help Rural Communities?

Diversifying Your Economy

When it comes to diversifying your local economy, national forests have a lot to offer. National forests contain cultural and historic treasures; wildlife, fishing, and recreation; timber and non-timber forest products; minerals and geologic resources; and incredible scenery. The question is how to capitalize on these assets, how to incorporate them into the rural economy while protecting them for future generations. Professionals who work for the Forest Service are also a resource — a part of the talent pool in a small town. The Forest Service in your community and in your region may be able to help in tangible ways.

Human resources: Forest Service employees can be the link between communities and government programs that offer rural community assistance. Their professional know-how in fields such as hydrology, engineering, and biology may also come in handy.

Natural resources: rivers, wildlife, timber, scenery, and range are marketable, and associated Forest Service sites and facilities may be available for community use.

Technical resources: computer capabilities, planning processes, feasibility studies, and scientific or technical knowledge.

Financial resources: grants, cooperative agreements, and cost-share partnerships.

The 1990 Farm Act authorized the Forest Service to help rural communities diversify their economies through the wise use of all forest resources. According to the act, the Forest Service was authorized to render technical assistance and to provide for rural forestry and economic action teams. How do you know if your community is eligible for assistance? Eligible communities must have relatively small populations, be located near national forests, and be both: (1) dependent on forest products and (2) economically disadvantaged as a result of Federal or private sector land management decisions or policies.

Three "economic action programs" are already in place to help your community solve local problems through natural-resource-based opportunities and enterprises:

1. Rural Community Assistance.
2. Forest Products Conservation and Recycling.
3. Market Development and Expansion.

These programs advocate economic approaches that sustain the environment. Here are some of the things Forest Service folks have been working on:

- Encouraging communities to organize their own economic development committees and link up with groups in other areas.
- Fostering high value-added processing (e.g., furniture manufacture).
- Spawning innovation through special products and alternative services (e.g., firewood, berries, specialty wood products).
- Enhancing productivity of existing manufacturing and services.
- Strengthening marketing of commodity and amenity resources.
- Improving information and promoting technology transfer.
- Offering education and leadership training to community members; encouraging employers to promote training.

Planning

The Forest Service is no stranger to planning. To direct its many programs, the agency completes national, regional, and forest-level plans, all of which require periodic update and review. Many projects (like timber sales or campground construction) require environmental analyses, and each of the hundreds of research programs is also directed by a plan. Each of these is a chance for the Forest Service to learn about community values and needs and for the community to dovetail its planning effort with that of the Forest Service. This kind of cross-pollinating can enrich both parties.

Referrals

The Forest Service is also an excellent place to start when trying to find other sources of Federal help. As part of this new effort, Forest Service employees are working closer with all levels of government and may be able to steer you toward programs you otherwise might not know about.

For more information about any of these programs, please contact your district ranger or the rural development regional coordinator in your area:

Rural Facts

"Despite an historical dependence on resource extraction and export, public land communities are increasingly seeing opportunities for economic benefit from recreation and tourism In many cases,...national forests and BLM lands are generating more value to local communities from these activities than from traditional commodity uses."

Sarah Bates, Natural Resources Law Center, University of Colorado School of Law.

Largest source of U.S. export income, second largest U.S. employer, and third largest U.S. retail industry: Tourism.

(U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration)

Third most popular activity among vacationers: Visiting small towns.

(New York Times July 1989 poll)

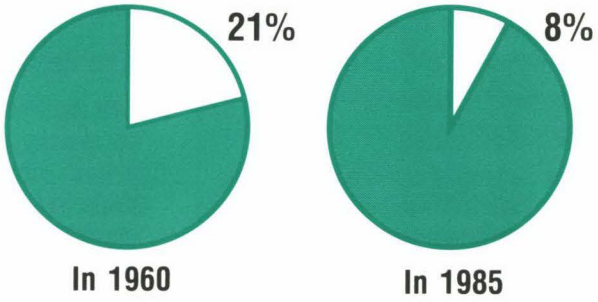
One of the country's five most attractive destinations to foreign visitors: rural America, especially its national parks and forests.

(U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration)

Amount of money spent worldwide on travel: $2 trillion.

Only type of nonmetropolitan area to have consistent, positive growth and immigration during the 1980's: Retirement communities.

Percent of nonmetropolitan jobs in the extractive industries (agriculture, forestry, fishing, and mining)



Where you can get more great statistics like this:

The Rural Information Center
National Agricultural Library
US Department of Agriculture
Beltsville, Maryland 20705
(301) 344-2547

Northern Region, R-1 (Montana, northern Idaho, North Dakota, and northwestern South Dakota), Dean Graham, (406) 329-3230, and Kent Nelson, (406) 329-3221.

Rocky Mountain Region, R-2 (Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and eastern Wyoming), Bob Dettman, (303) 236-7073.

Southwestern Region, R-3 (Arizona and New Mexico), Larry Roybal for New Mexico, (505) 988-6940, and Cal Joyner for Arizona, (602) 556-2076.

Intermountain Region, R-4 (Southern Idaho, Nevada, Utah, and western Wyoming), Wes Harvey, (801) 625-5259.

Pacific Southwest Region, R-5 (California, Hawaii, Guam, and Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, Robert Erwin, (415) 705-2678.

Pacific Northwest Region, R-6 (Oregon and Washington), Ed Allen, (503) 326-4168.

Southern Region, R-8 (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virgin Islands, and Virginia), Alan Pigg, (404) 347-7486, and Gary Pierson, (404) 347-2784.

Eastern Region, R-9 (Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin), George Lundy, (414) 291-3631.

Northeastern Area S&PF (Same States as Region 9), Lew McCreery, (304) 285-1536.

Alaska Region, R-10 (Alaska), Steve Bush, (907) 271-2577.

Community-based planning is the single most useful vehicle for creating, capturing, and capitalizing on innovation in communities.

(Donovan Rypkema, Real Estate Trust)

Polishing the Collaborative Process

In Huntsville, we cooked up some creative responses to the question: What innovations would make collaborative planning more effective? We only had time to elaborate on a few of these during the springboard session (see next section), but there's lots more work to do. We encourage you to experiment with some of the good ideas below.

A Simplified Process

1. Prioritize community assistance programs, so fewer initiatives will be needed.
2. Simplify the process by which communities attain financial and technical planning help.
3. Develop a framework for bringing organizations with converging interests together for planning and serving communities. Develop a strategic action plan for rural economic development throughout USDA.
4. Remove organizational and turf barriers that get in the way of getting things done.
5. Reach key leaders and groups at all levels to form a better block of support for rural community assistance within the political process. Prepare a white paper to sell the idea of State Rural Development Councils to States that don't yet have them.

Lowest Level Funding

6. Encourage the Forest Service to use lump-sum funding so local officials will have more flexibility. Community assistance should be responsive to real needs, not program-driven.
7. Decentralize programs so that program decisions can be made at the lowest level.
8. Reward innovation and entrepreneurship, not grantwriting ability, by assigning funding discretion to the lowest possible level.
9. Return a large percentage of all forest-generated revenues back to counties.

Nonprofit Organizations

10. Form nonprofit, community-based rural development organizations to act as a bridge between agencies and the community. The nonprofit groups would plan, obtain funding from all sources, prioritize expenditure of funds, and implement the community's prioritized action plan.

Human Resources

11. Use local human resources to enhance community diversification efforts. Examples include Job Corps, volunteer pools, jail inmates, senior citizens, and university students looking for school projects.
12. Establish roving technical assistance teams to help communities or Forest Service. Teams would include personnel from many different organizations. Skills or specialties would involve grantwriting, group dynamics, fiscal management, rural development, sociology, inter-governmental relations, and leadership training.

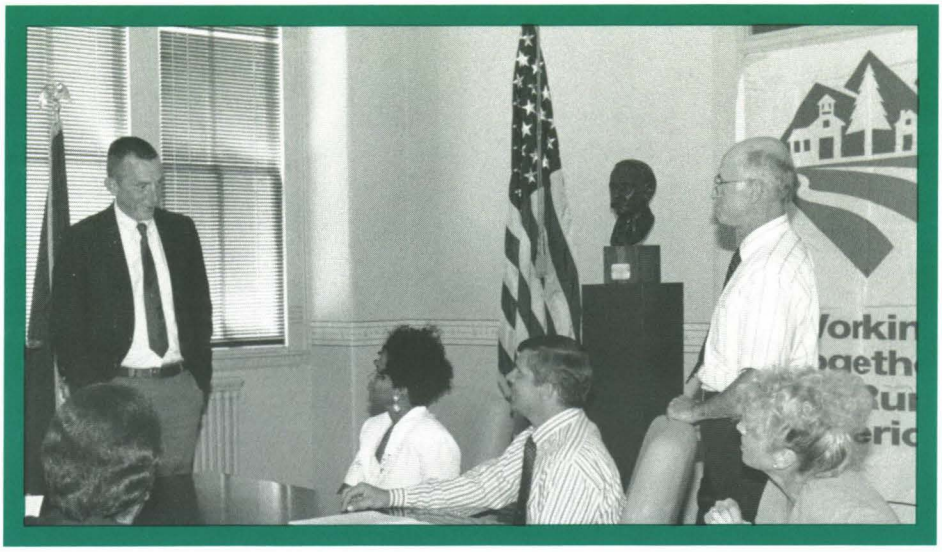
Collaborative Planning Models

13. Bring unconventional collaborative planning models to light. Market the availability of these models. Institutionalize collaborative planning in government agencies.
14. Use search conference methodology on a large scale; agencies could use it to decide how to deliver rural assistance more effectively.
15. Redefine success in rural development and experiment with different scorecards for success. "More jobs" is only one measure of success; a community may measure its success in terms of quality of life or self-sufficiency (getting off the grants wagon).
16. Use new brainstorming techniques. One example is the "next solution" process, in which the question "What would we have to do next to solve the problem?" is asked five times in a row to get to a deeper level of solution.

Education and Empowerment

17. Train Forest Service officials and community representatives in new skills and knowledge needed to work with communities, such as economics, inter-governmental relations, leadership training, grants, agreements, group dynamics, fiscal accounting, needs assessment, community organizing, and sociology. Training options could include Sloan Fellowships, loan executive programs, or joint training between the community and the Forest Service.
18. Recognize and empower multi-agency employees, the local government, and the individuals within the community to deal with the objectives in sustainable communities.
19. Demonstrate that rural development and environmental protection can coexist successfully. Create a publication that would list environmentally compatible projects — a possibilities menu. Try some possibilities out in demonstration projects.
20. Hold educational forums to create understanding among the stakeholders and key players at all levels, so missions, vision, and roles are understood.
21. Empower communities through information. Examples include pilot projects, shared geographic information systems, and resource management/infrastructure management.
22. Develop brochure to inform communities how the Forest Service can help with rural community planning.

Places Where It's Working



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Bill Koelm (left), Kremmeling Colorado, discusses how his community responded to the closing of a waferboard plant.

Escalante, Utah

After a shutdown of a large corporate mill, community members in Escalante, Utah, purchased and reopened the mill, complete with value-added manufacturing. The scaled-down mill was able to handle smaller wood material than the larger mill had. Perhaps the most exciting development was that environmental groups, many of whom had been totally opposed to national forest timber sales to support the larger mill, were now sitting at the planning table saying, "Here's something we can support. The scale is right and we like the value-added aspects of the mill." So, in a town where polarization was once the norm, collaborative planning paved the way to a locally owned economy that met the long-term needs of both the people and the land.

Kremmeling, Colorado

Kremmeling was another "endangered town" faced with a crisis when the closing of a waferboard plant left nearly one-fifth of its residents unemployed. Thanks to strong community involvement and financial and technical help from the Forest Service, Kremmeling is now featured in news programs as a "comeback" town. Though the town is small ("You think your town is small?" quips town manager Bill Koelm "at least you have a newspaper; we have to do it all by rumor!"), it has a great heart. Kremmeling's new Vision for the Future, an economic development plan, seeks to preserve its "small-townness" and low cost of living. It also aims "to encourage focused, sustainable, and diversified business development which is also environmentally sound." They've already produced a four-color brochure to attract more recreationists and won a grant to study the feasibility of attracting value-added wood industries. In the wake of the plant pullout, diversity is the name of the game. Bill Koelm says Kremmeling would rather attract "10 companies hiring 20 people each than 1 company hiring 200."

Cuba, New Mexico

When the folks of Cuba, New Mexico, really thought about it, they realized that what was central to their well-being was not "chasing smokestacks" or erecting a brand new visitor center; it was having clean water and a functioning watershed. A lot of work has to be done before they can safely say their watershed has healed. This commitment to restoration was the result of a search conference in which community members sequestered themselves for a few days and envisioned a new Cuba. Their list of priority projects changed from short-term, job-related fixes (before the conference) to long-term social and environmental overhauls. Cuba is now working toward a rehabilitated watershed, a youth council, an economic development board, a continuing education program, and an improved banking and finance climate. This work will lay the foundation upon which every other dream depends.

Huron-Manistee National Forest, Michigan

When it came time to revise the forest plan on the Huron-Manistee National Forest in Michigan, something extraordinary happened. Not one person or organization appealed. This wasn't for lack of interest; on the contrary, it was because a voraciously committed group, called Friends of the Forest, had hashed out contentious issues over the years. Finally, the Friends were satisfied that they had a plan that everyone could live with and feel good about. Friends of the Forest is an example of a community of interest that's working. By having this group involved in open discussions, months of legal wrangling were avoided.

Alabama

Cookie-cutter approaches to planning don't work in rural America. Every community is different. John Clyde Riggs brought this home to us when he told us about some of the poorer Alabama communities that he deals with. "The first step is to instill pride in the townspeople. For these communities, rural development means finding a way to string electricity or run indoor plumbing pipes to homes that have never had them." The motto in his office is "whatever it takes."

Taking Action After Huntsville

Our group in Huntsville was prolific, especially when it came to suggesting innovations — processes and products that would expedite collaborative planning in rural America. A core group of participants stayed an extra day, sorted through the innovations, and agreed to bring five of the best suggestions to life. Here's the action plan from the "Springboard Session."

Action 1: Develop a guidebook of success stories to show that rural development and environmental protection can coexist.

What the group agreed to do: (a) Find various success stories, decide on a criteria for inclusion in the guide, and make selections, (b) arrange for the guide to be published and distributed to communities and agencies.

Bob Dettman, Louise Liston, Bill McAllister

Action 2: Encourage all agencies and communities to participate in State Rural Development Councils.

What the group agreed to do: Arrange for letters to be sent from all levels of government to agencies and communities that are not a part of Rural Development Councils. These recruitment letters should explain the benefits of membership to rural communities and urge them to join.

Ed Allen, John Nordin, Steve Yaddof, Jerry Cirino

Action 3: Develop a matrix of available resources (e.g., expertise, various planning models, financial assistance) and give it to communities going through the collaborative planning process.

What the group agreed to do: (a) Develop the matrix, (b) market its availability, and (c) ensure its delivery to people who need it.

Ed Allen, John Nordin, Steve Yaddof, Jerry Cirino

Action 4: Bring collaborative planning models to light and show that they work.

What the group agreed to do: (a) Collect, identify, and summarize existing collaborative models, (b) develop a presentation package that introduces these models and make sure it is distributed through existing channels, e.g., newsletters, and (c) arrange for a presentation on collaborative models to be delivered to NACo, Rural Development Councils, COG's, WIR, NACD, and NATaT.

Bill Wagner, Tara Drolma, Brent McBeth, Don McArthur, George Morris, George Enneking

Action 5: Create a nonprofit development organization in each community that will plan, obtain, and administer funding; prioritize action plans; and then carry them out. The goal is to funnel all rural development efforts through one community-based entity and therefore use money and assistance more efficiently.

What the group agreed to do: (a) Organize a forum to discuss this nonprofit option and (b) encourage the Forest Service to study the Soil Conservation Service's process to see if this would be worthy of adoption.

Gary Serien, Dixie Thompson, Vivien Zaricki, Ned Davis, Jerry Cirino

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